INSIDER

DARK HORSE COMICS NO.7 JULY 1992

JAM-PACKED ISSUE!
Twenty-four (count 'em!) July features

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2
Exciting new installment by Stradley and Warner

RETAILER OF THE MONTH

NEXUS SPECIAL
An insider's look at the creative process with Baron and Rude

...AND MORE!

INSIDE THE INSIDER

THE INSIDE TRACK
1

JULY FEATURES
2-15,18-24

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2
16-17

INSIDER'S LOOK AT *NEXUS*
25-28

SNEAK PREVIEW
29-32

INSIDE OUT
INSIDE BACK COVER

FRONT COVER ART
BY JOHN BOLTON,
FROM *EVIL DEAD:*
ARMY OF DARKNESS

BACK COVER ART
BY STEVE RUDE,
FROM *NEXUS: THE ORIGIN*

INSIDE FRONT COVER ART
BY DOUG WILDEY,
FROM *RIO AT BAY*

INSIDE BACK COVER ART
BY GARY GIANNI,
FROM *DARK HORSE CLASSICS:*
20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

EDITOR: KRIS YOUNG
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: ANINA BENNETT
DESIGN & PRODUCTION:
CAROLYN MEGYESI AND EGON SELBY

RETAILER OF THE MONTH

DEWEY'S COMIC CITY 4 PARK AVENUE MADISON, NJ (201) 593 - 0042

Ricky Karowski of East Hanover, New Jersey, wrote in to recommend Dewey's Comic City as "Retailer of the Month." Ricky's letter makes it clear that Dan "Dewey" Veltre is indeed an outstanding comics retailer who makes his store a place where comics enthusiasts can truly enjoy their hobby.

Special features at Dewey's Comic City include an Insider's Club service that reserves selected comics for members; a free weekly newsletter that Dewey publishes, which includes comic-book reviews, a "Next Week" listing of upcoming books, and other hot news; a great selection of comics, trading cards, figures, role-playing games, collector supplies, and more; occasional special discounts that allow customers to stretch their comics dollars; and of course, a knowledgeable and helpful staff.

These sound like services and amenities that most of us would hope to find in a good comics shop, but Ricky goes on to describe efforts that go above and beyond the norm:

"*Just recently, Dewey started a half-price special on certain back issues every Tuesday. Unfortunately, when one of my favorite titles came up I was home sick with the chicken pox. When I recovered and came into the store, Dewey allowed me to pick the issues I wanted for half price even though the special on the title I wanted was over. I think that was especially nice of him, and it shows that you are a person and a valued customer even if you are only fourteen years old, as I am.*

"*Dewey also started a display area where you can exhibit your own comic character drawings. I was impressed with some of the amateur work that was put up. It would be great to think that you saw the first work of someone who later became a famous comic artist.*"

Ricky added this postscript to his letter: "*My favorite new comic,* John Byrne's Next Men, *has been completely sold out after each shipment. However, I did not have to worry about getting my copies, because I am a member of Dewey's Insider's Club, and my copies were reserved for me.*"

Dan "Dewey" Veltre of Dewey's Comic City joins the illustrious ranks of "Retailer of the Month." Our thanks and some Dark Horse goodies go to Ricky Karowski for spreading the news.

If you'd like to see YOUR favorite comics retailer touted in the *Insider*, tell us! Be sure to include a photo of the store and/or owner, store name, address, and phone number, and send it to:

Retailer of the Month
c/o Dark Horse Comics
10956 S.E. Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97222

WE'RE LOADED!

This issue of the *Insider* is jam-packed! With 24 (count 'em!) July features, we've had to spill over into the preview section in order to get everything in. But don't worry — we've left room for a sneak preview of **Matt Wagner**'s *Grendel: War Child*, beginning on page 29. *Nexus* fans are in for a very special treat with "The Way We Do the Things We Do; or *Nexus*: **The** Origin," written by Dark Horse editorial assistant Jennie Bricker. Her in-depth interview with creators **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude** will give you a real insider's look at the unique creative process that goes into the making of *Nexus*. Check out page 25 for the story. Other features in this issue include "Retailer of the Month," and everyone's favorite, *Aliens vs. Predator 2* by **Randy Stradley** and **Chris Warner**.

The *Insider* continues to change and improve with each issue, and much of the thanks goes to you, our readers. Your ideas and suggestions are great! "The Horse's Mouth" lettercol appeared for the first time in *Insider* #6, and will be a recurring feature. We'll be using more of your ideas, too. Stay on the lookout for interviews, profiles on Dark Horse writers, artists, and editors, works in progress, and more new features in future issues. Keep sending in your comments and suggestions. If your letter appears in the *Insider*, you'll not only get the fame and acclaim, but also a cool Dark Horse gift. Send your feedback to: Insider Feedback, c/o Dark Horse Comics, 10956 SE Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222.

Keep reading!
– Kris Young

NEXUS: THE ORIGIN

Q: What's black and white and ten years old? A: The first issue of Capital Comics' *Nexus*, of course! And Dark Horse is celebrating a decade of *Nexus* with the release of a color one-shot by original series creators Mike Baron and Steve "The Dude" Rude! *Nexus: The Origin* is just what the title sounds like — a brand-spankin'-new, updated slicker-than-glass retelling of the origin of Nexus himself. Long-time *Nexus* readers will be surprised by some of the material in this origin story, and for *Nexus* neophytes there'll never be a better introduction to the character and his history.

This is the first in a series of new *Nexus* projects from Dark Horse. *Nexus: The Origin* is written by **Mike Baron** (*The Punisher*), pencilled by **Steve Rude** (*World's Finest*), and inked by **Gary Martin**, with a stunning cover painting (and bonus back-cover painting, too!) by Rude.

$3.95 U.S., $4.75 Canada. 48 color pages, saddle-stitched deluxe format, painted cover.

Shipping July 14, 1992.

NEXUS
THE ORIGIN
YOU HID FROM YOUR VICTIMS, YOU CHANGED YOUR NAME.
YOU FLED WITH YOUR BLOOD MONEY TO THE FARTHEST CORNERS OF THE GALAXY..
NOOOO...

EVIL DEAD: ARMY OF DARKNESS #1 (OF 3)

"Who's laughing now?" Not Ash, the hero of Sam Raimi's cult-classic film *Evil Dead II*. Armed with his chainsaw and shotgun, Ash finds himself stranded in the Middle Ages, battling the resurrected armies of the Dead! This adaptation of writer/director **Sam Raimi**'s (*Darkman*) upcoming sequel to *Evil Dead II* is scripted by Raimi himself, with painted interior art and cover by **John Bolton**.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada.
32 painted color pages, painted cover.

Monthly. Shipping July 7, 1992.

ALIEN^3 #2 (OF 3)

What's the only thing worse than having to face an Alien? Doing it AGAIN! And now Ripley's up against them for the *third* time. Adapted from the *Alien*^{3} screenplay by **Steven Grant** (*Badlands*), with art by hot newcomer **Christopher Taylor** and **Rick Magyar** (*The Question*). Eerie cover painting by **Arthur Suydam**.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada.
32 color pages, painted cover.

Biweekly. Shipping July 7, 1992.

ALIEN^3 #3 (OF 3)

Ripley finds that the most horrifying thing about fighting Aliens may actually be the battle within. The grand finale, from adapter **Steven Grant** with art by **Christopher Taylor** and **Rick Magyar**. Moody cover painting by **Arthur Suydam**.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada.
32 color pages, painted cover.

Shipping July 28, 1992.

ALIEN^3™

THE YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES #6

Indy's suddenly on the wrong side of World War I when he finds himself behind German lines in a French army uniform. Surrounded by some of the worst carnage of the first World War, he carries a message which means the difference between life and death for hundreds of French soldiers. **Dan Barry** (*Predator: The Bloody Sands of Time*) pencils his own adaptation of the teleplay; **Gray Morrow** (*The Creep*) provides the inks, and **Greg Wright** the colors. Cover by Dan Barry.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada.
32 color pages, color cover.

Monthly. Shipping July 14, 1992.

RIO AT BAY #1 (OF 2)

The outlaw lawman is back in the saddle for yet another rip-roarin' adventure! This time, Rio encounters a young lad with incredibly good luck at cards, but mighty bad luck in life. Dark Horse Comics is proud to present a classic western tale from master storyteller **Doug Wildey** in this all-new series. Each page is rendered in glorious painted color, bringing the old West vividly to life. This issue also features a biography of Wildey, giving us a look at his impressive career in both the comics and animation fields. This issue's cover logo will be printed in special silver ink. Story, art, and painted cover by Doug Wildey.

$2.95 U.S., $3.50 Canada.
32 painted color pages, saddle-stitched deluxe format, painted cover.

Monthly Shipping
July 21, 1992.

DEADFACE: EARTH, WATER, AIR, AND FIRE #1 (OF 4)

Bacchus and Simpson travel to Sicily in this first issue of a brand new four-issue series written and drawn by **Eddie Campbell**. While Bacchus waxes poetic on the Greek god Hephaestus, who set up shop in Sicily back when it was still "The Land of Persephone," Vinnie Bossanova has become a target for Sicily's all-too-modern-day inhabitants — the Mafia! Writer/artist Campbell, illustrator of Alan Moore's *From Hell* and creator of the outrageous *Eyeball Kid* as well as the autobiographical *Alec* stories, puts a novel twist on the characters of Greek mythology (especially the wine-enamored Bacchus). This is his first full-length Bacchus story, and it demonstrates his growth as an artist and a storyteller. Dramatic collage cover painting by Campbell.

Suggested for mature readers.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada. 32 B&W pages, painted cover.

Monthly. Shipping July 14, 1992.

MOTHER OF GOD! DID YOU EVER SEE ANYTHING LIKE IT?
...still a lot of fire in the mud.
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU LOT?! GOT NO RESPECT FOR THE CLASSICS? THIS IS BACCHUS, THE GOD OF WINE!!
More likely the God of Wimps.
Looks his age, too.

Deadface™

EARTH • WATER AIR • FIRE

CHEVAL NOIR #32

Premiering this issue is "Sabotage," a witty tale of war, love, industrial espionage, paranoia, and fast cars, by the internationally renowned **Daniel Torres**! Plus, the second installment of "In Search of Peter Pan," by **Cosey** ("Voyage to Italy"); more mayhem from **Cailleteau** and **Vatine** in "Fred and Bob: The Rabbit Hunt"; and "The Angriest Dog in the World," by **David Lynch**. Topping it all off is a gorgeous cover painting by **Dave Gibbons** (*Watchmen, Give Me Liberty*)!

Suggested for mature readers.

$2.95 U.S., $3.50 Canada.
32 B&W pages, painted cover.

Monthly. Shipping July 14 1992.

CHEVAL noir
STRANGE... THERE'S A LIGHT ON IN THE STUDIO, BUT I TURNED THEM OFF WHEN YOU STOPPED WORKING.
MY PLANS!
The fog's getting thicker and thicker. Better go back.
Now it's the same story all over again...

CARAVAN KIDD #1

Horse and Studio Proteus deliver! Announcing- *Caravan Kidd*, the exciting new series from manga creator of *Outlanders*. *Caravan Kidd* continues in of sizzling science-fantasy with romance and off-the-wall screwball humor. Few titles laughs per issue as *Caravan Kidd* — grab a seat and

Dana Lewis and **Toren Smith**.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada
32 B&W pages (no ads!)
painted cover

Monthly. Shipping July 14, 1992.

THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD: CLIMATE OF FEAR #1 (OF 4)

After his ordeal in Dark Horse's first *Thing From Another World* series, MacReady awakes to discover that he's been transported to an Arctic [illegible] far from Antarctica... but so has the Thing! Get ready to strip down to gooseflesh as writer **John Arcudi** (*Aliens: Genocide*), penciller **Jim Somerville** (*Aliens: Newt's Tale*), and inker **Robert Jones** turn up the heat on the [illegible] of time! Painted cover by *Thing From Another World* artist **John Higgins**.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada
32 color pages, painted cover

Monthly Starting
Jan. 21, 1992

THE VENUS WARS II #2

Though Ishtar has defeated Aphrodia in the colonial war on Venus, internal political struggles threaten to push Ishtar toward [illegible] as two parties grapple for control of the hearts and minds of the populace. cadet Matthew Radom finds himself caught in the middle as shadowy, power hungry figures set into motion a high-stakes game of [illegible] and assassination. Story, art and painted cover by **Yoshikazu Yasuhiko**. English translation by **Alan Gleason** and **Toren Smith**.

$2.25 U.S., $2.75 Canada. 32 B&W pages (no ads!) painted cover.

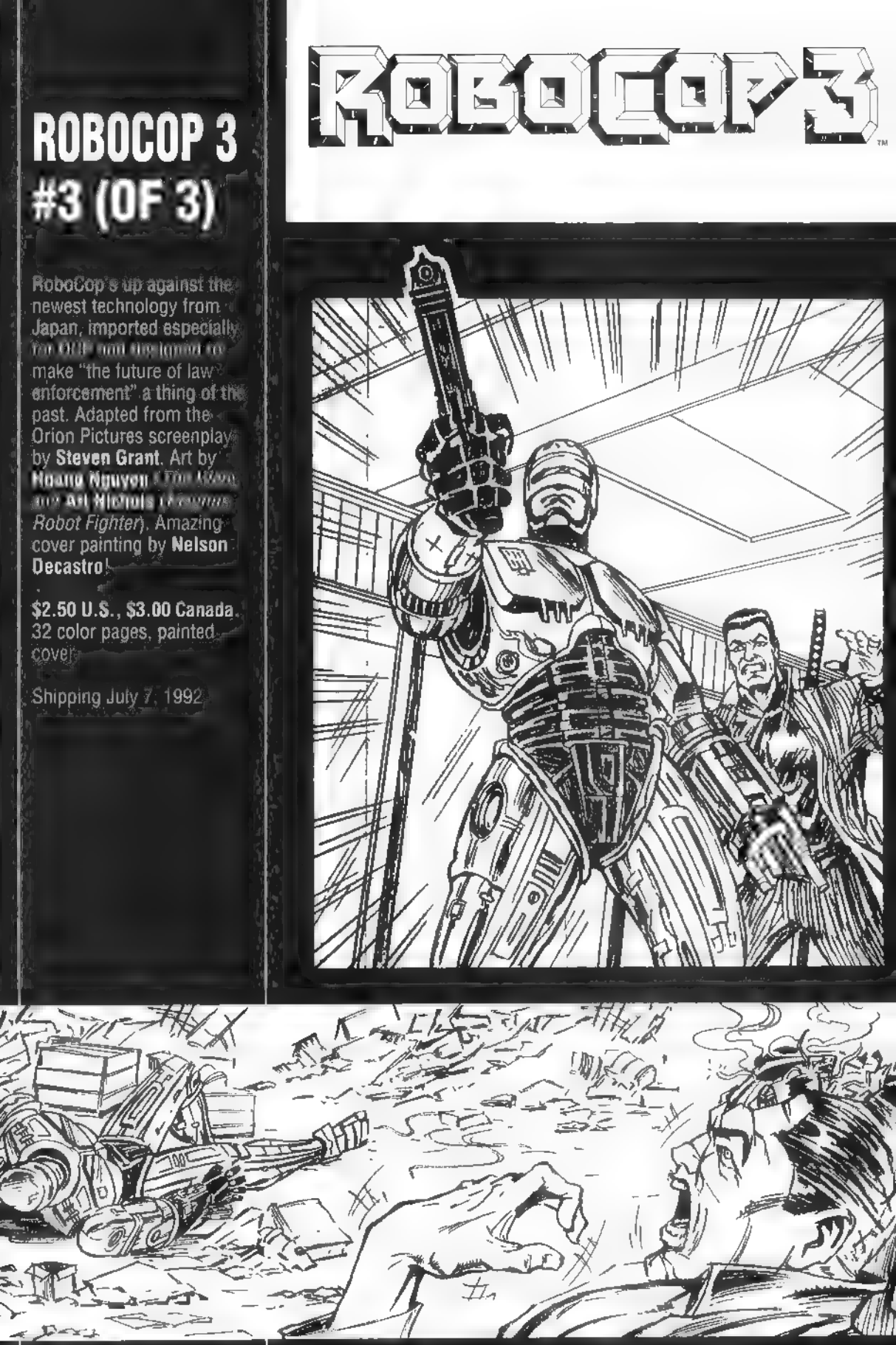
Monthly. Shipping July 7, 1991.

ROBOCOP 3 #3 (OF 3)

RoboCop's up against the newest technology from Japan, imported especially for OCP and designed to make "the future of law enforcement" a thing of the past. Adapted from the Orion Pictures screenplay by **Steven Grant**. Art by **Hoang Nguyen** (*The Atom*) and **Art Nichols** (*Assassin Robot Fighter*). Amazing cover painting by **Nelson Decastro**!

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada. 32 color pages, painted cover.

Shipping July 7, 1992



MODERN CLASSICS: FREAKS' AMOUR #1 (OF 3)

Tom DeHaven's cult novel *Freaks' Amour* comes to comics! **Mark Burbey**, **Phil Hester** (*Rust*), and **Andé Parks** adapt DeHaven's nightmarish vision of America after the bomb... the one that took out New Jersey! The survivors of the blast, twisted by radiation and the contempt of the human population, try to make ends meet any way they can. Ko Kolmer and his brother Flour (that means everything from traveling sex shows to dealing the ultimate drug: goldfish eggs! Cover by **Charles Burns**.

Suggested for mature readers.

$3.95 U.S., $4.75 Canada; 48 B&W pages, color cover.

Bimonthly. Shipping July 14, 1992.

FREAKS' AMOUR
WHO CARES? I LIKE MY LOOKS FINE
HIS SELF-ESTEEM BOTHERED ME, EVEN WHEN I WAS 12, 13, 14 IT MADE ME FEEL GUILTY, SINCE I HAD NONE OF MY OWN.
I HAD SKIN LIKE A FISH, I GRINNED LIKE A SKULL: NO SELF-ESTEEM
ALAN'S ROOM
THOOMP
THOOMP

JOHN BYRNE'S NEXT MEN #6

Here it is — the comic so daring that the title characters don't even appear in it! That's because at the time this issue takes place, they don't yet exist! This look back at the genesis of Project Next Men will answer all those [illegible] what's behind Senator [illegible]'s [illegible], and how he met his sinister partner. Everything by **John Byrne**, except for colors by **Matt Webb**.

Suggested for mature readers.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada.
32 color pages, color cover.

Monthly. Shipping July 14, 1992.

VAMPIRELLA: TRANSCENDING TIME AND SPACE

For those who can't get enough of Vampirella's earlier adventures, the *Vampirella: Transcending Time and Space* trade paperback will reprint stories from issues #17-23 of the classic *Vampirella* magazine, featuring Vampirella and Dracula. With 148 pages of action and seduction for a mere $12.95 cover price, this would be a bargain even without the stunning, never-before-seen cover portrait of Vampirella by **Dave Stevens**!

Published by Harris Publications, and distributed into the direct-sales market by Dark Horse Comics.

$12.95 U.S., $15.95 Canada.
148 B&W pages, squarebound, painted cover.

[illegible] July [illegible]

THE TERMINATOR: THE ENEMY WITHIN

This volume collects the sizzling four-issue miniseries written by **Ian Edginton**, illustrated by **Vince Giarrano**, and colored by **Steve Buccellato**. Don't [illegible] Terminator, must fight impulses from his computer half that pressure him to eliminate the humans Wes Crandall and Zyda. With another Terminator still on their trail, the three must quickly decide whom to trust, and how to fight Terminators on both ends of the timeline! Featuring a new cover by **Simon Bisley**.

Readers' note: Contains some harsh language and sexual suggestion.

$13.95 U.S., 16.95 Canada.
112 color pages, squarebound, painted cover.

[illegible] July [illegible]

THE TERMINATOR™
THE ENEMY WITHIN
Mission status: locate and terminate Doctor Edwin Astin, Colonel Mary Randall. Terminator 8825 M

OUR QUARRY IS SUBDUED, AND HER CHILDREN ARE HELD AT BAY BY HER VULNERABILITY. BUT NOW COMES THE MOST DANGEROUS PART--
--THE CAPTURE TEAM MUST MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THE QUEEN AS TOPKNOT PREPARES HER FOR TRAVEL.
SHRIK
AAAHHRK!
THREE-SPOT IS CAUGHT DAYDREAMING--

STORY BY RANDY STRADLEY

ART BY CHRIS WARNER

HE PAYS FOR HIS LACK OF VIGILANCE...
...PAYS HARD...
URF!
...AND PUTS THE REST OF US IN PERIL.

THE AMERICAN: LOST IN AMERICA #1 (OF 4)

Reporter Dennis Hough sees a golden opportunity (not to mention dollar signs) when he's asked to help with a governor's re-election campaign. The only [illegible] deliver the American as the governor's new spokesman, and the American has joined a mysterious cult and disappeared! Written by creator **Mark Verheiden** (*Predator: Cold War*). Art by [illegible] **Chris Marrinan** (*Spider-Man*) and inker **Brian Garvey** (*Aliens: Newt's Tale*). Cover by **Dave Dorman**.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada
32 color pages, color cover

Monthly [illegible]
July 7, 1992

THE AMERICAN
IN BYGONE DAYS, AMERICA WANTED TO BELIEVE IN ITS HEROES. IN PARTICULAR, A RED, WHITE AND BLUE CRUSADER KNOWN AS THE AMERICAN.

HARD LOOKS #3 BY ANDREW VACHSS

This issue includes three adaptations of **Andrew Vachss** stories, as well as a new, previously unpublished short story by Vachss. *Enemy Ace* artist **George Pratt** adapts "Cripple," **Neal Barrett, Jr.** and **Jack Pollock** adapt "Man to Man"; and "Anytime I Want," adapted by **Jerry Prosser** (*Exquisite Corpse, Aliens: Hive*) and **James O'Barr** (*The Crow*) rounds out the issue. Cover painting by James O'Barr.

Suggested for mature readers.

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada
32 B&W pages, painted cover.

Bimonthly. Shipping July 28, 1992.

ROBOCOP VERSUS THE TERMINATOR #3 (OF 4)

After encoding his own personality and programming directly into Skynet's memory banks, RoboCop plays a deadly hide-and-seek game with the master computer bent on destroying all organic life on Earth. Is RoboCop beaten? Don't place any bets until you see the "[illegible] of the [illegible]." Action and adventure as you like it from Frank Miller and Walter Simonson!

$2.50 U.S., $3.00 Canada
32 color pages, color cover

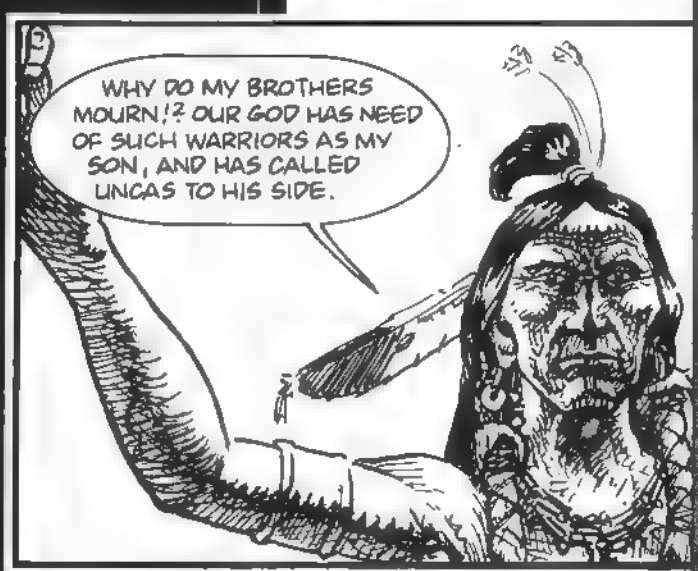
Monthly [illegible]
[illegible]

DARK HORSE CLASSICS #1: THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

James Fenimore Cooper's novel is adapted by the master of the historical comic, **Jack Jackson.** Follow the adventures of Chingachgook and Hawkeyes in 1757, the third year of the French and Indian War. Jackson's *Los Tejanos*, *White Comanche* and *Secret of San Saba* have established him as one of the finest talents working in the medium. Beautiful painted cover by **Sam Yeates.**

$3.95 U.S., $4.75 Canada
48 B&W pages, saddle-stitched, painted cover

Shipping July 7, 1992



DARK HORSE CLASSICS

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

ADAPTED BY JACK JACKSON

DARK HORSE PRESENTS #64

Matt Wagner's "The Aerialist" swings into action once again, **John Arcudi** and **Dale Eaglesham**'s "The Creep" sticks his ugly mug into another case, and **Bubby Rubio** dives into a special feature by the group of aspiring writers who attended **Steven Grant**'s writing workshop at last year's San Diego Comic Con. Plus: chapter one of the three-part prequel to the upcoming horror film *Doctor Giggles*, by writer/director **Manny Coto** and artist **Alan Burrows**! Cover painting by Matt Wagner.

Suggested for mature readers.

$2.25 U.S., $2.75 Canada.
32 B&W pages, painted cover.

Monthly. On sale
July 7, 1992.

DHP™

DARK HORSE PRESENTS

CREEPY

CREEPY #3

Will bounty hunter J.J. Jackson's untimely arrival upset Uncle Creepy's careful plot? The mansion itself tries to stop J.J. with a variety of sinister impediments, including an eight-foot killer clown. (Shades of Stephen King's IT!) Main story by **Peter David**, with art by **Jim Mooney** and **Tom Sutton**. Three modules by **Colleen Doran** and **Jackson Guice**. Cover painting by **Dan Brereton**.

Published by Harris Publications, and distributed into the direct-sales market by Dark Horse Comics.

$3.95 U.S., $4.75 Canada.
48 B&W pages, squarebound, painted cover.

Bimonthly. Shipping July 14, 1992.

A ONE-OF-A-KIND COLLECTOR'S ITEM PUBLISHED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH GOLDEN APPLE COMICS, AND BASED ON THE FAMOUS "GOLDEN APPLE GIRL"!

The true-life story of *Playboy* centerfold Suzie Owens serves as the source for the inspirational origin tale of Flaxen, America's newest super-glamour gal. From her "real" identity as a nurse lacking in looks and self-confidence through her transformation into the most powerful pinup in the nation, Flaxen is a woman of the nineties. Witness her incredible metamorphosis, not unlike the real-life tale of Suzie herself. Story by **Mark Evanier**, with art by **Richard Howell**, **Tim Burgard**, and **Jim Mooney**.

This special package includes a triple-page photo centerfold and pinups of Suzie "Flaxen" Owens by **Sam Maxwell**, **Steve Rude**, **Sergio Aragones**, **John Romita**, and **Dan Spiegle**. Cover painting by Steve Rude.

Published by Golden Apple Comics, and distributed to the direct-sales market by special arrangement with Dark Horse Comics.

$2.95 U.S., $3.50 Canada.
32 color pages, triple-page foldout, painted cover.

Shipping July 21, 1992.

PRESCRIPTION - STRENGTH DEADLINE U.S.A. #4

Tired of the sheep and join the wolves? Then sink your choppers into *DEADLINE U.S.A.*, featuring only the choicest cuts of alternative comix prepared in the manner suited to the refined palates of urban sophisticates like yourself. This issue features **Ruby Bond**'s "Wired World," **Scott Musgrove**'s "Tortilla Baby," "Johnny Nemo" by **Peter Milligan** and **Brett Ewins**, **Brian Iverson**'s "Young Kafka," "A-Men" by **Shaky Kane**, **Jack Pollock**'s "Devil Chef," "Timulo" by **D'Israeli**, **Phil Hester**'s "Nail Boss," and much more. Cover painting by the oh-so-modern **Stan Shaw**!

Suggested for mature readers.

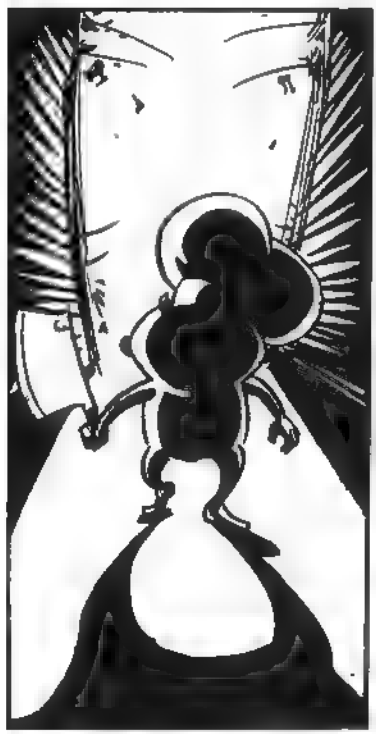
$3.95 U.S., $4.75 Canada; 48 B&W pages (no ads!) painted cover.

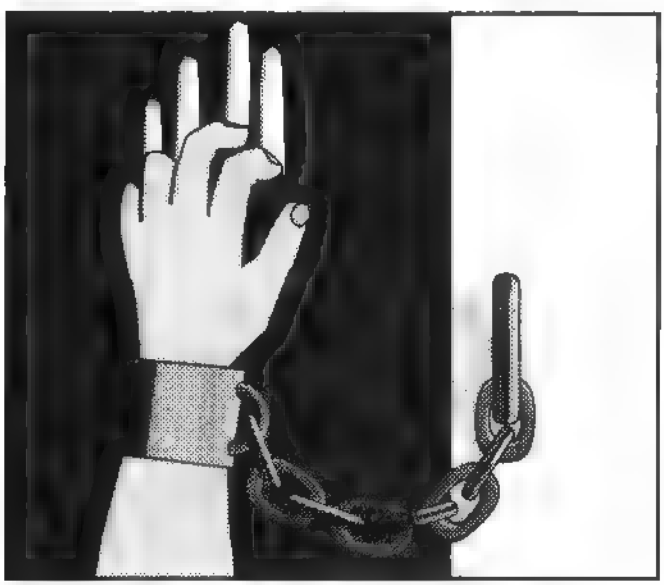
Monthly. Shipping July 24, 1992.

PRESCRIPTION-STRENGTH

DEADLINE

DEADLINE U·S·A





A VISION APPEARS TO ME. A ROOM WITHIN THE BLACK TOWER WHERE HORRIBLE TORTURES AWAIT.

The Way We Do the Things We Do; or Nexus: The Origin

by Jennie Bricker

When I climbed out, the costume was waiting. I put it on. I knew what I had to do. —Nexus

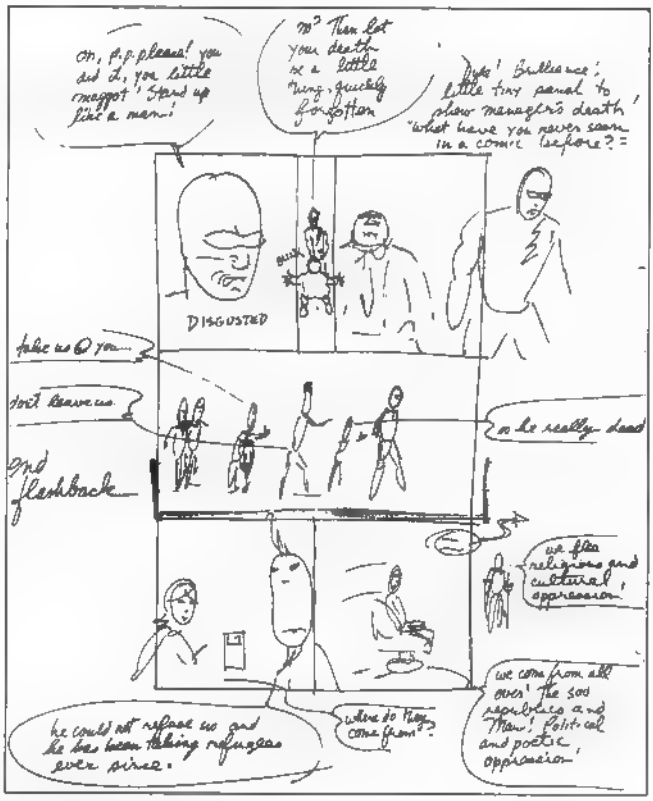
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"... Do I dare disturb the universe? —T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"

One night in 1932, during a bout of insomnia, Jerry Siegel conceived a new kind of hero. He rushed his ideas to his buddy, Joe Shuster, and in 1938 Superman finally graced the pages of *Action Comics*. Fifty years later, Mike Baron and Steve "the Dude" Rude emerged, in tandem, from some primordial creative ooze with a story that at once reinvents and revises the superhero trad tion: *Nexus*. For both Baron and the Dude, that story is intensely persona.

WHY THEY DO IT

Nexus is a reluctant superhero an executioner forced by torturous nightmares to set right the njustices of the cosmos The child of Baron's teeming brain that took form under the Dude's meticulous pencil, Nexus was the "costumed superhero" that Capital Comics demanded and the compelling, believable personality that the creators found interesting. "Nexus bursts out of the superhero genre," says Baron. "The story is typified by a constant looking inward, a preoccupation with philosophical issues The appeal of the character is his ambiguity about h'mself "

"I like the ambiguity," the Dude agrees, "because it's like real life. I despise cliché writing Baron's a guy who's never given me cliché writing." But the character of Nexus is personal in another way, too. Nexus may be ambivalent about his role, but the role itself is clear: he exacts instant capital punishment for crimes — almost always, mass murder or serial killing — against the members of any of the societies that make up the Web of worlds. Both Baron and Rude mention a newspaper article about a murderer who's spent ten years on death row, postponing his execution with appeals Baron sees the beginnings of a story in the article, enjoying the neatness of a possible Nexus solution. For the Dude, the feeling is more pronounced. "I want to snuff this guy out so fast he won't even have time to blink first," he insists. "That's what Nexus does. They don't get away with it. No lawyers, no appeals — it's direct."

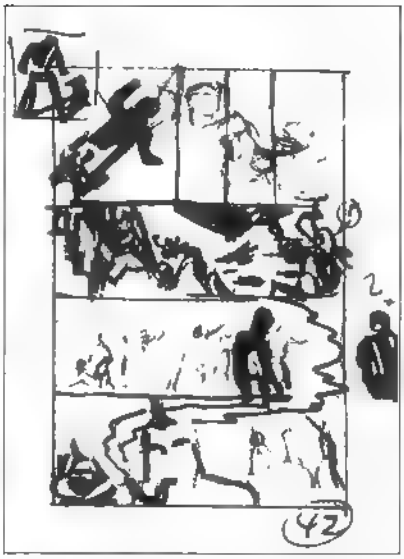


▲ *Page 43 from Baron's stick-figure story for* Nexus: The Origin

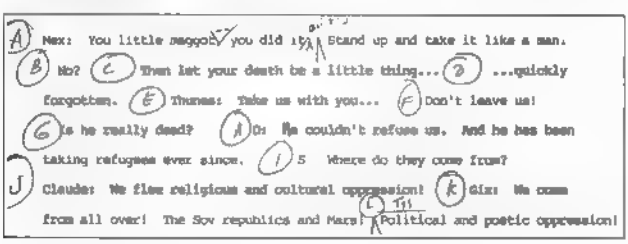
HOW THEY DO IT

Plotting along: Nexus is a character whose actions are direct but whose motives are convoluted. And that — the strong personalities of the characters who people the *Nexus* universe — is what triggers the evolution of a Mike Baron story. "Within the overall theme of redemption for the innocent and punishment for the guilty, the story is really dictated by the characters," Baron explains. "A story begins with an idea of some sort, usually a scene I write the entire story with stick figures and handwritten dialogue and notes, one page of story per page of art." Baron admits his hand-

Actual-size page (43) from the Dude s "thumbnails." ▶



Pencilled version of the same page ▼


A Nex: You little maggot, you did it! Stand up and take it like a man.
B No? C Then let your death be a little thing... 2 ...quickly forgotten. E Thanes: Take us with you... F Don't leave us!
G Is he really dead? H Oh: He couldn't refuse us. And he has been taking refugees ever since. I S Where do they come from?
J Claude: We flee religious and cultural oppression! K Gin: We come from all over! The Sov republics and Mars! L Political and poetic oppression!

▲ *Page 43 from Baron's script*

written marginalia can be hard to make out, but claims the page-per-page format makes it easier on the artist than the more conventional minute descriptions of scenes. The Dude is a fan of Baron's unusual style: "Baron gives me the story — I need that direction. Baron thinks visually, and I do, too."

The Dude: With a Baron stick-figure story in front of him, Rude maps out the issue as a whole in thumbnail sketches of each page, aware of the placement of every panel as well as the direction and pace of the entire plot. "Storytelling is such a shrewd thing if you want it to be," says the Dude. "You can try out innovations and little bits of flashiness, but they have to be accessible. They have to make sense. Paul Gulacy is my idol for that. It's a rare gift." From his thumbnails, which measure only 1.5 x 2.25 inches per page, Rude moves on to "boards" — 11 x 17-inch sheets with margins marked out in "non-photo" or "non-repro" blue ink that is invisible to cameras, scanners, and photocopiers — where he begins drawing what will become the final pages of the *Nexus* comic book. After blocking out the figures in non-reproducing blue, he renders everything in pencil, with a now-legendary attention to detail. He also pencils in sound effects and margin notes to the editor, Baron, the letterer, the inker, and the colorist. Often, he uses his own image in the mirror as a model, particularly for Nexus' figure. "Drawing is fun," says the Dude. "Nexus is wonderful to draw. I love Sundra. I like the Dr. Seuss kinds of characters, like Dave. He's so wise, so gentle. I like people like that. I get into the characters intensely when I draw. It's very emotional sometimes, and sometimes it's draining. But when it's finished, I get something back, too, and that invigorates me."

The script: What Baron gets back is equally invigorating — the chance to see his characters in the flesh, or the two-dimensional equivalent of it. He also gets the task, once the pencilled art is complete, of writing a final script, with text for each balloon and caption.

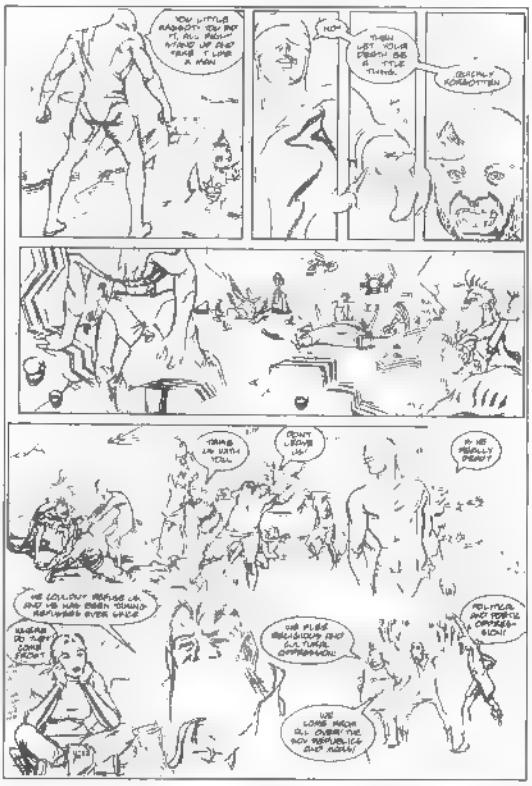
Post script: The completed script and original pencils are whisked away to *Nexus'* editor, Anina Bennett. At the Dude's special request, Bennett not only edits his work, but sends him her opinions about it. "It's particularly tough doing notes for Steve," she says. "His work is so good that I find myself pointing out the tiniest imperfections and inconsistencies. It's

a real stretch of my critical abilities which ultimately is to my benefit as well." Bennett pores over the drawings, making final decisions about balloon placements and editing the script as necessary to fit the space available in each panel without obscuring too much of Rude's art. A two-year veteran of *Nexus*, Bennett calls it, not without a trace of sarcasm, "a truly unique experience." But she also enjoys the challenge it represents. "Steve's perfectionism is demanding and inspiring at the same time — I put a lot of work into *Nexus* to make it look as good as he wants it to look. My job is to ensure that everything is done to Mike and Steve's satisfaction."

The balloon man: Other players in the *Nexus* drama echo Bennett's concern about the high standards Baron and Rude exact. Bennett's balloon-placement guides and the original pencils go to letterer Willie Schubert, who explains his role: "I soak the boards literally in gasoline, then I set fire to them and mail the ashes to Steve. Steve then sends me a letter bomb." Under pressure, Schubert admits that is really only an April Fool's Day fantasy, actually, he uses a combination of hand lettering and computer graphics to produce balloons, captions, sound effects, panel borders, and display lettering such as signs and labels directly on the penciled boards. The challenge the letterer faces is making the text of the script fit into the space allotted for it with in the art. "What the job boils down to," Schubert continues on a less frivolous note, "is a lot of puzzle-fitting. *Nexus* requires a little more fitting than most, but then I like the result better than most."

The inker: Gary Martin, the inker, is the next player to receive the boards. Working around balloons, captions, and other elements inked in by Schubert, Martin draws in ink over Rude's penciled illustrations — a more delicate and involved task than he sometimes gets credit for. Martin has ten years of inking experience and says he's from the "old school": he uses a brush for 90% of his work. Although brush work requires more patience than using a pen, he believes brushes can be more versatile. And versatility is just what he needs, especially for inking the Dude's work, according to Martin, "It's trying to get inside the head of the penciller and figure out what he's trying to do. With Steve, that's most challenging. His work is several notches higher than most, so inking it is both the hardest and the most rewarding."

For the inker, though, the rewards rarely include the same artistic recognition accorded the penciller — despite the fact that, like Martin, most inkers are also illustrators. But Martin doesn't mind the lack of attention. In fact, he



Pencils for page 43, with lettering by Willie Schubert

The same page after inking by Gary Martin

says, "The focus shouldn't be on the inker. If the inker does his job, he makes the penciller look good."

That may be part of the reason Rude scrutinizes the inks of his illustrations so carefully, sometimes even making corrections on the original boards when the inking is finished. "I'm very critical," the Dude is the first to admit, but he also counts on the editor to put the pages in their final (perfect) form. Bennett marks any mistakes — stray lines, unclear balloon positioning, and lettering "typos" — and hands the boards over to Dark Horse's production department, where corrections are made and page numbers pasted on each board.

keep building on themselves," she says. "It's the beginning that's difficult. The first forty pages are completely open." When Giddings has finished her painstaking painting and coding, she sends the colored pages back to Bennett, who passes them on to computer colorists at Dark Horse. When every color specified by Giddings has been coded, the DH Service Bureau produces color proofs, and Bennett and Rude give them one last look-through. Once the proofs have the editors' big OK, they go back to the Service Bureau for color separations, which become eight-page sets of film, which are stripped into position, re-checked, and shipped to the printer. Voila! *Nexus* is born. It makes the birth of Nexus himself look like a piece of cake!

Steve Rude and Mike Baron, right of center, made a cameo appearance (with some friends) in Nexus *#50.* ▼

True colors: Photocopies of these final pages are whisked away next to the colorist — Noelle Giddings, whose work on DC's *Prince* comic attracted Rude's attention and prompted him to suggest her. Giddings begins her work on *Nexus* with *The Origin* and has already found the Dude's work "tough to color, very detailed." She adds, "Steve likes special effects and has clearcut ideas about the coloring of *Nexus*; on the other hand, he also told me to feel free to be as experimental and wild as the scene demands." The difficult part of her job, says Giddings, is transforming the black-and-white artwork into a color story, including elements that might not be obvious in black and white, like lighting angles or time of day. Once she makes those decisions — with help from Bennett and Rude in the form of color notes — she paints each page in concentrated watercolors that she premixes to correspond exactly to shades produced by the computer coloring system used at Dark Horse. After painting a page, she marks color codes for the computer colorist, using various percentages and combinations of the four basic printing colors: black, cyan (blue), magenta (red), and yellow. Giddings expects that getting used to *Nexus* will take some time. "Once things are established, they

The name game: Why is this unlikely character called Nexus? "I wanted a name with an X, Y, or Z in it," Baron explains, "because those letters seemed to carry a lot of power in the comics genre. I liked the X, and I liked the way the word was emblematic of itself — the X is right in the middle of a word that means a juncture or meeting place. Not only that, the *character* Nexus represents a juncture, standing between his own race and the race of the Merks, which wants to pass on its own sense of justice." It's certainly true that *Nexus* forms a juncture of its own, a project that brings together the remarkable talents of Mike Baron, Steve Rude, Anina Bennett, Willie Schubert, Gary Martin, and Noelle Giddings.

Nexus: The Origin ships in July, kicking off a series of *Nexus* projects from Dark Horse — including a new Baron and Rude miniseries that debuts in November. So join us as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of that enigmatic character who has enough depth to be prey to insecurities we can all relate to, yet commands powers we might all dream of possessing — in a word, **Nexus**.

SNEAK PREVIEW

GRENDEL™

war child

After a two-year publishing hiatus, the long-awaited *Grendel* is back with a vengeance! The first issue of this all-new, ten-issue storyline picks up several years after the events of *Grendel* #40. Creator/writer **Matt Wagner** inks newcomer **Patrick McEown**'s pencils, while colorist **Bernie Mireault** utilizes the glorious animation cel-style color process he pioneered in *The Jam Color Special*. A dynamite cover painting by **Simon Bisley** gets this series off to a major jump-start!

Grendel: War Child #1 ships August 4, 1992.

FINISH YOUR MEAL.
AND TRY YOUR BEST TO IGNORE THE SURROUNDINGS
KRAK!
COME...
IT IS TIME TO LEAVE.
PAF! PAF!
OKAY
THEY JUST LEFT HEADED EAST REMEMBER, I GET FIVE PERCENT.

WELL, WELL, WELL...
...WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
A FULL-FLEDGED SOLDIER...
THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE TOO GOOD FOR CHILLY OL' CHI: "INELIGIBLE FOR CLAN STATUS."
COME TO PLAY, SOLDIER-BOY?

YOU'LL SEE, SOLDIER-BOY. WE CAN PLAY AS ROUGH AS ANY OF YOU CLAN TYPES. YEAH...
WE CAN PLAY...
KTANG!
OOMPH!
WOMP!
GCK--
HUGK--
N-NA!
I HAVE NO CLAN-- NOR ANY RANK.
I AM UNIQUE.
GGGG...
THUK!

INSIDE OUT

SHIPPING AUGUST 4

Dark Horse Presents #65
The Venus Wars II #3
Nina's All-Time Greatest Collector's Item Classic Comics #1
Evil Dead: Army of Darkness #2
Classic Star Wars #1
Godzilla Color Special #1
Grendel: War Child #1
Flaming Carrot #28
(Shipping July 28)

SHIPPING AUGUST 11

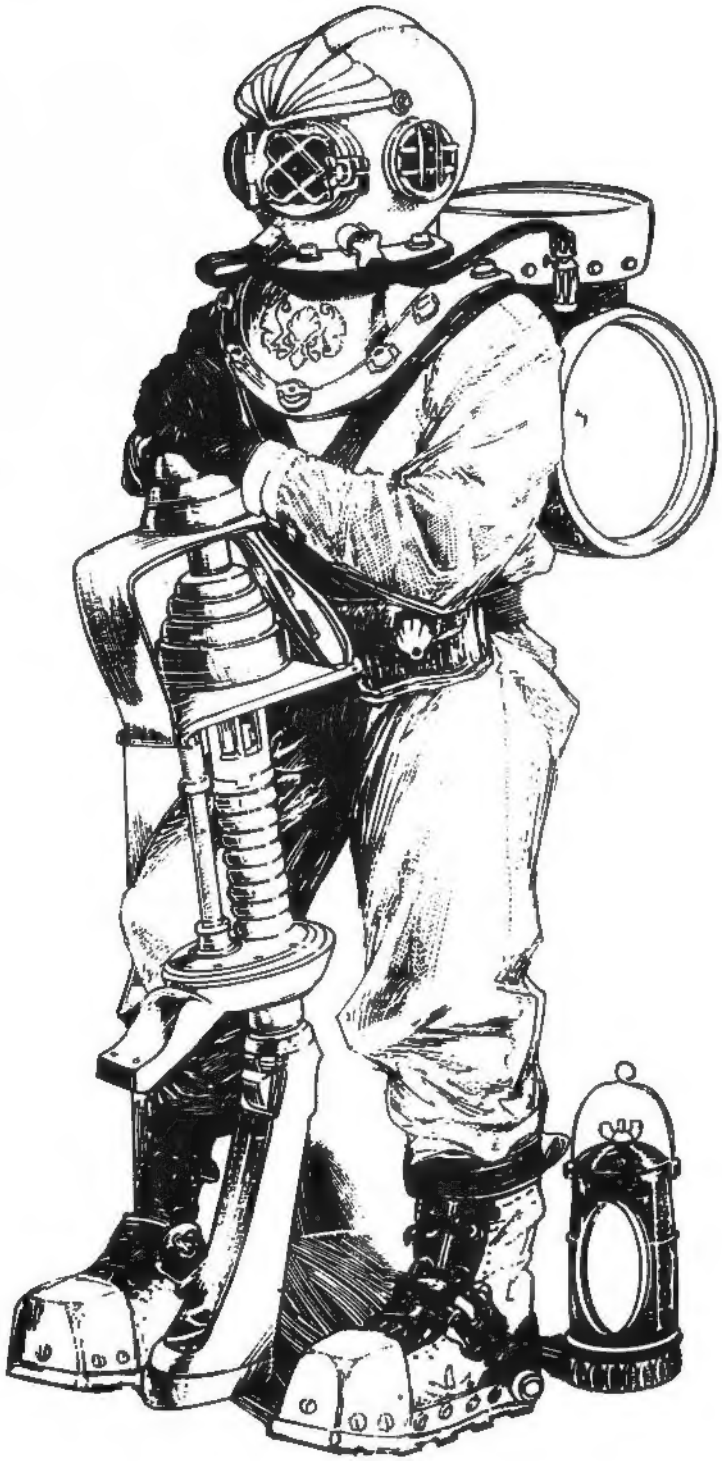
Cheval Noir #33
Caravan Kidd #2
The American: Lost in America #2
The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles #7
James Bond 007: Serpent's Tooth #2
Nexus the Liberator #1
Critical Error
Aliens: Tribes limited edition
Prairie Moon and Other Stories

SHIPPING AUGUST 18

Deadface: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire #2
Workingman's DEADLINE U.S.A. #5
Rio at Bay #2
The Thing from Another World: Climate of Fear #2
Star Wars: Dark Empire #5
Vampirella's Summer Nights

SHIPPING AUGUST 25

RoboCop versus the Terminator #4
Dark Horse Comics #1
Intron Depot



COMING IN SEPTEMBER

DARK HORSE CLASSICS #2:
20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA,
ADAPTED BY GARY GIANNI.

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